



U.S. EMBASSY - BAGHDAD

## 2008 Provincial Reconstruction Team News

### -PRT Expert Shares Farming, Water Use tips with Iraqis-

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**Muthanna Province, Iraq** - Wayne Marcus, Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) Water Engineer, seems to know everything about water and farming. A native of Highland, Illinois, Marcus spent his youth working the land and is now determined to help Iraqi farmers increase their yields while expanding water use.

Influenced by his grandfather, a farmer, Marcus worked the fields as a youth and tended live-stock on his family's farm. Back then, growing up in the heartland of America, he never dreamed he would one day live in Iraq, the "Fertile Crescent" of ancient history, helping its farmers recover from conflict.

Now, Marcus has been in Iraq for close to three years, and has found helping Iraqis rebuild their agricultural sector the most rewarding work of his life.

The American faced challenges. Muthanna is one of the poorest and driest provinces in Iraq and farming lies at the very heart of its economy. Beginning in 2008, the PRT sought to develop closer ties with the Muthanna Farmers' Union, an organization that has deep roots in Province's rural and tribal communities.

Muthanna PRT Team Leader Brad Lynch and Public Diplomacy Officer Aaron Snipe recently accompanied Marcus to a meeting with Union officials where two important issues were discussed: Agriculture and Water management.

The discussion also gave Marcus and the PRT a chance to review the farming equipment needs of the Union and examine how U.S. Government assistance could further help the thousands of members of this important cooperative.

In addition to the technical discussions with officials from the Farmers' Union, Marcus shared some of his own personal experiences working his family's farm.



*Muthanna Team Leader Brad Lynch (on left) meets with Wayne Marcus and Iraqi official to discuss agricultural issues.*

The Iraqi officials were delighted to hear of his professional and personal expertise and one Iraqi remarked, "It's good that Mr. Marcus, too, has so much good experience in farming. We need assistance from those who understand our concerns."

The Iraqis also discussed the need for water treatment in the province. Many of Muthanna's rural residents drink the same water they use to irrigate their crops, which can lead to many water-borne illnesses.

Water purification continues to be an important issue for Muthanna, and the PRT visited an important source of water for much of Province, Lake Sawa.

In the midst of the dry and cracked earth that stretches for miles in Muthanna, Lake Sawa is an unexpected and welcome relief. Not far from Samawa, Muthanna's provincial capital, it is over three miles long and 36 feet deep.

For the Iraqi officials and PRT, Lake Sawa has tremendous potential. First on the team's agenda, during its visit, was taking water samples. Team Leader Lynch looked skeptically at the water, as he detected the strong odor of sulfur. Marcus told the team that the health benefits from waters high in minerals were well-known, and that the smell of sulfur might signal a valuable natural resource.

Marcus conducted a thorough assessment and discussed with the Iraqi water manager of the Lake the possibility of introducing new fish species and the potential for wind power generation near the lake.

While the team had seen Lake Sawa on maps of the region, visiting the site for the first time gave Marcus and the others a better sense of how the PRT might partner with the Provincial Government to use this large natural resource.

"The potential for a lake like Sawa, so rich in minerals, is boundless," Marcus said. "We've got another great opportunity to help the people of Muthanna, so let's get back and get this water tested!"